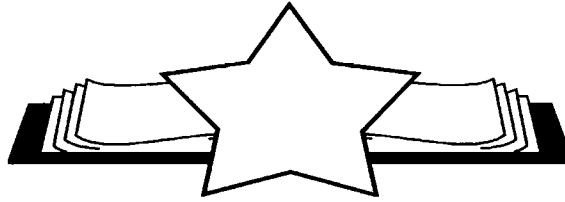


NEW JERSEY

2000-2001

Guidelines and Application

STAR



SCHOOLS

**Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000**

The Star School application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page

County	Middlesex		
District (Proper Name)	South Brunswick Public School District		
Address	4 Executive Drive / P.O. Box 181 Street/P. O. Box Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852 City Zip Code		
Telephone	Fax 732-422-8054	Email www.sbschools.org	
Chief School Administrator	Samuel B Stewart, Ed.D.	sbstewart@sbschools.org	
Nominated School (Proper Name)	South Brunswick High School		
Address	750 Ridge Rd. Street/P. O. Box Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852 City Zip Code		
Telephone	Fax 732-274-1237	Email www.sbschools.org	
Principal	Thomas Kietrys	tkietrys@sbschools.org	
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<i>Samuel B. Stewart</i>		

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature *MJ Chudoff*

NEW JERSEY
STAR SCHOOLS
2000-2001 APPLICATION

RESPONSES to the information below and the statements must be ANONYMOUS. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school or the community. Use the words "the school" in referring to the applicant in the responses to the statements.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Grade Levels _____ _____ <u>9 - 12</u> _____	School Enrollment _____ Name of the School's Specialization or Whole-School Reform Model Assessment _____
Location: ____ Urban/city; ____ Suburban with urban characteristics; ____ Suburban; <u>X</u> Small City/Town; ____ Rural		
Previous Star School: Yes __ No <u>X</u> If Yes, Year(s) _____		

KEYBOARDED RESPONSES to the statements below must be **no more than a total of five pages.** Keyboard the statement followed by the response.

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,** that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.
2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.
3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.
4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*? Provide student performance data for the school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 using state tests and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.
5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.
6. **Previous Star School Winners Only:** Provide a one-page addendum to your application that describes efforts to expand or replicate the specialization or whole-school reform model within the school and/or the district. Have there been dissemination activities beyond the school or district? If so, please elaborate.

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.
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1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.

The primary goal of this high school is high academic performance by all students and assessment has been a major tool to reach the goal. Assessment, as we define it, means making progress visible. Good assessment has two purposes: (1) to assure that school and classroom practices can be adjusted on the basis of real data and (2) to assure that students get regular, excellent feedback about performance.

First, the management team uses data that is easy to come by. For instance, they disaggregate available information about students such as course selections to assess whether any group is under-represented or over-represented in specific courses. Similarly, they look at the results of the audit of performance provided by the state (HSPT) and that used by the colleges (SAT) and set up sub-goals and action plans when there is a problem. For example four years ago the school set goals to improve the performance of young women on the SAT. So, too, there are yearly surveys of the attitudes of staff and parents and there is a team review of students who are failing at the end of each quarter.

Second, teachers use a variety of prompts and rubrics in their classrooms. Department members who teach a specific course, such as Biology I, develop appropriate tasks and rubrics for all sections; teachers working alone develop others. All of the assessments, however, measure important learning—not just learning that is easy to assess. The content standards in every area call for learning that is difficult to measure and the emphasis on assessment assures that students get good feedback on these objectives.

Finally, the school has developed an assessment for all freshmen called the Freshman Project. Its expressed purpose is to assure that students are able to:

- Make connections among the content areas studied in class
- Pose relevant, researchable questions
- Identify, locate and organize information from a variety of sources to answer questions
- Present accurate, interesting and logical research orally, visually and in writing
- Identify presentation media and increase their expertise in its use
- Use a feedback mechanism to improve their work

The project is directly related to achievement of the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, Numbers 2, 3 and 4. This staff believes students able to use information technology, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skills, will be more productive all through high school. In addition, the major goal of the project—to assure students can plan and work independently—is echoed in Cross-Content Standard 4, “All students will demonstrate self-management skills.”

The project begins with a spirited, kick-off assembly. All students, regardless of level or classification, receive the identical assignment. They learn that although they must complete the project independently, they must use concepts and skills from across disciplines to successfully address the task. At the same time, they get information about worksheets that will be used to mark their progress and about the rubrics that are used to measure success. Students are measured on their competence in: (1) relating their subject to the overall concept (this year students are asked to respond to the concept of challenges and support that selection) (2) using effective processes to gather information and keep track of it (3) getting and using feedback from adults and peers and (4) making high quality presentations orally, visually and in writing.

Students develop a mentoring team of adults from both inside and outside school. Parents and other relatives are encouraged to participate as mentors and are invited to join in the

intellectual challenges at several meetings over the life of the project. Staff members, upon request, agree to mentor students and, like parents offer continual support and feedback. The students open a journal to organize their efforts.

At the conclusion of the project, students exhibit their completed projects to a panel of two teachers from various departments in the school. This is a rare opportunity for teachers across discipline areas to work together. It is also a rare opportunity for students to have the undivided attention of two teachers on a topic chosen by the student alone.

This project is a graduation requirement. If a student does not pass one of the sections, he or she must revise and resubmit the particular component. Students must show competency in all areas; not just pass a percentage of the total. Thus, this project is a rigorous performance assessment. It caps the high school's commitment to helping young people learn to use their minds well and to providing them with challenges and feedback as they gain independence, learn to use sophisticated research and presentation skills and master the technology. The Freshman Project serves as the foundation for continued academic success.

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

The process of regular assessment and examination of data has lead to changes in instruction in the building. For example, this school went through a three-year development effort leading to adoption of block scheduling. Teachers visited other schools, read the major literature on use of time and discussed teaching and learning strategies. Teachers who had been teaching in the block for some time augmented workshops on brain research given by Dr. David Sousa and Dr. Robert Sylwester. The change to block scheduling impacted the practice of every teacher.

Now that the school has settled into an every-other-day block schedule, new questions about teaching and learning have developed. Membership in two important organizations has helped. We have been aided by Grant Wiggins' assessment and design center (Understanding by Design) and by the network provided by The Coalition of Essential Schools.

The Supervisor of the English department and several other teachers were trained in Understanding by Design and, besides demonstrating and sharing good assessment design in their own departments, they have offered a series of workshops on assessment to all departments. For three years, over 40 teachers have met monthly to talk about assessment, share prompts and rubrics and reflect on classroom experiences with authentic assessment.

Over a two year period, 22 teachers attended the three-day conference of Essential Schools. There they were able to hear about innovation in all areas including assessment in high schools across the country. They have developed a plan to share the information they gathered with fellow teachers. Sixty members of the staff participated in a weeklong summer workshop on cooperative learning given by associates of Kagan at Harvard. They explored new assessment methods as they adjusted their theories of good teaching and learning. They meet monthly to share classroom experiences and review new strategies.

Faculty members are encouraged to attend programs that address their own individual interests and teaching niches as well as foster school goals. For several years, we have participated at Princeton University in small seminars on topics that stimulate the intellectual curiosity of teachers about literature, history, technology, and current affairs. Additionally, members of the Social Studies Department regularly attend programs at Rutgers University Center for Historical Analysis and are members of the Civics Education Consortium.

This school is located in a community that is experiencing tremendous growth. As a result, it applied for and recently received a federal research grant that will foster education about how large schools are evolving into small learning communities. Under the grant, study groups have been established to visit other schools and explore theoretical models.

Study groups are often established to support teacher inquiry in this school. New staff members, for example, meet regularly to share experiences and build the professional portfolio required for non-tenured teachers. Teachers may apply for district Instructional Council Grants that provide financial resources beyond budget allocations to attend conferences of their choice. Additionally, this school is the recipient of a grant from the State Department of Education that provides for the mentoring of first and second year teachers. As a result, this year, novice teachers are paired with more experienced teachers who serve as their mentors.

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.

This is a very large, fast-growing school with close to 2000 students, in a community that has vast economic, religious and ethnic diversity. In 1997, the staff opened a new facility that accommodates 2000 students. In the spring, the community voted to add an addition that will accommodate 1000 more students. Thus, the school's second goal is to build community and personalize the education of all students.

Under the direction of the principal, the staff has established an every-other-day, 90-minute block schedule and organized themselves into two houses—a Foundation House for grades 9 and 10 and an Upper House for grades 11 and 12. New roles for teachers were created when the houses were established. Currently, there are three teacher leaders for each house and a teacher who is in charge of student activities. Each teacher leader has a reduced schedule.

All of these management changes are designed to help the staff build important relationships with the students in their care. Teachers are able to work with students for a sustained period of time in the classroom, permitting projects and activities related to the content areas. The house leaders make sure that students are not forgotten, calling together teams of adults when students are in difficulty and overseeing the Freshman Project and the special end-of-year internships and activities for Seniors, called Senior Society. The teacher in charge of activities rallies the staff to build a positive community valued by its members.

The school community is using the new Middle States accreditation process, Accreditation for Growth to build a strategic plan. Every staff member in the building participated in the planning and the two goals set forth in this application—student academic achievement and building a positive community—were affirmed and described. Teacher leadership managed the process and the whole staff celebrated its achievement when accreditation was awarded.

Despite its diversity and its rapidly increasing population, this school system spends less than the state average per pupil. Our expenditure for the 1999-2000 school year was \$7723 per pupil; the state average was \$8,487. The high school has been fortunate to rent its facilities during the summer and the income has been used to further professional activities. Fiscal responsibility is built on efficient use of resources by the administration. This school has demonstrated creativity in finding new resources to achieve its purposes.

4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the Core Curriculum Content Standards? Provide student

performance data for the school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 using state tests, and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which group, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.

The emphasis on assessment which characterizes this school began about four years ago and grew rapidly. Last year's seniors were the first to have responsibility for the Freshman Project and 100% of the class showed competence in all areas before graduation. Over the years, however, there were many positive variables influencing school achievement and it is impossible to ascribe success to any one of them. Thus, we try to show trends as well as growth over a single year.

Ninety-nine percent of the students passed the HSPT and received a diploma at graduation. The percentage of juniors passing all parts of the HSPT on the first attempt: 1996-80%; 1997-78%; 1998-87%; 1999-84%. While there have been fluctuations in the scores of students, the scores have remained essentially the same while the population has increased and become more diverse. The mean scores on total SAT: 1996-1033; 1997-1069; 1998-1062; 1999-1051. The 1999 decrease in scores, though not dramatic, reflects the fact that no students are excluded from taking these tests. In 1998-1999, 79% of the total seniors took the SAT, and in 1999-2000 85% took the SAT. The percentage of students who pass the HSPT before the senior year rose from 91% in 1997 to 96% in 1998. The use of data to identify problems works with testing as well as with program development. For example, a gap between male and female achievement was identified. Several activities to address the gap were implemented. The result is that the gap between male and female math achievement on the SAT narrowed from 42 points to 12 points. The number of young women in advanced science courses doubled and the females scored better than males on the verbal test for the first time in school history.

The percentage of students going to four year colleges has gone from 55% in 1995 to 67% in 1999. During the same five years, the percentage of students going to two year schools has hovered around 25%.

One of the biggest achievements in the building revolves around the Advanced Placement courses. The Board of Education pays for these exams so no students take the courses without preparing for the examination. With that, the number of AP courses has doubled and the percentage of students scoring three (3) or above has been maintained at about 77%.

5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

The high school aims to collaborate closely with families, business, the community, school districts, and institutions of higher education in an effort to address student needs and promote high student achievement. Faculty members are encouraged to establish traditional and extracurricular contacts with families.

More progressively, however, the school has established a School Site Council comprised of students, parents, guardians, teachers and administrators. This group has as its mission to address concerns which impact the achievement of students. To this end, the Principal and Vice Principals, house leaders, and class advisors are urged to attend regularly. This group has considered such diverse topics as whether there should be a new grading system, class rank, clarification of the school's mission statement, and issues underlying a referendum. While this

group does not fundraise, it does provide limited grants to projects it feels will impact the whole student body.

Career and Advanced Study Exploration (CASE) is a program that requires students to explore what is available in the work place and their possible fit. Panels of local business people and community leaders are available to the students over a period of several weeks. These community members volunteer time to share their knowledge of various careers. Work site visitations are also available. Students may participate in a workplace experience in the form of an internship, volunteer experience or paid employment within the community or surrounding area. Each student may choose a sponsor at the workplace who willingly gives the student feedback and guidance. Students have two to three years to complete this CASE program. Over 250 local and extended businesses and agencies have contributed time to this program. The involvement of parents, guardians, community members, business and teacher mentors make this a rich experience for students as they move toward their transition to the world of work.

In addition, the high school's English and Math departments have been working together for three years in a collaborative program with the local county college faculty and administrators. This group meets in order to identify ways to help the graduates be more successful in college. In particular, this group is working together to reduce the number of their graduates who need to take remedial course when they attend the county colleges. This project is part of a Goals 2000 federally funded grant.

Last year a new collaboration was begun with the local newspaper. The editor of the paper is working closely with our journalism teacher to provide students with opportunities to publish their work. The editor also visits the journalism classes during the year.

Two other local collaborative efforts are the school's Safe and Caring Schools Committee and L.A.M.P. The Safe and Caring Schools Committee consists of community members, police, family members, administrators, students, and faculty members. This group meets to address the issue of school safety and to establish procedures to follow in case a crisis situation occurs. L.A.M.P., (Leadership and Mentoring Program), is a program that connects young women in the high school with women in the community to learn about careers and to provide an open forum to examine the challenge of transition into adulthood.

A new 2000-2001 project this year is collaboration between students in the high school and mentors at the Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. Students who are interested in a medical career travel to the hospital after school one day a week.

This high school has an ongoing relationship with Rutgers University including staff who serve as adjuncts in the Rutgers Program as well as serving as mentors for student teachers. The high school also has an ongoing relationship with The College of New Jersey with emphases in the fields of science and technology.